

Abstract for the 8<sup>th</sup> DA@Monash Symposium “Researching Discourses with an open mind”  
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My PhD research entitled “Digital Navigators: How young Pacific Island adults are using Facebook in Aotearoa New Zealand” focuses on how young Pasifika adults (those who are of Pacific Islands’ heritage namely Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Fiji and Niue), many of whom are second and third generation NZ-born people, are using Facebook in their social, family and everyday lives. I use discourse analysis tools to look at how their realities are socially and culturally constructed and the interface of this construction in social networking. I also explore how integral language is to fashioning that sense of reality amongst migrant peoples whose ancestral languages are replaced by English in their everyday lives and the actual and potential impact on these communities.

The first phase of my study involved interviewing young people in friendship or kinship groups that were already established, using audio and video camera recordings. For the second phase of my study, participants were interviewed individually using video camera recordings and a screen capture programme called HyperCam 2 to track where, how, when and why they went online and especially how they interacted with their friends on Facebook. The video and screen capture has been invaluable in transcribing my interviews. The body language, facial expressions and visual clues recorded on video helped to further clarify and confirm the words of research participants.

Key themes that are emerging for Pasifika young adults in my research so far are:

- Pasifika issue of identity in Aotearoa NZ – issues of ambivalence e.g. there is a lot of pride in Pasifika identity, yet a perception of “Pasifika plastic-ness” with ancestral language loss and limited access to traditional life. Family and the nurturing of family is the key driver for Pasifika young adults’ identities, yet they perceive that they have very limited freedom.
- The overwhelming influence of the Christian church-going tradition for Pasifika peoples and the challenges and perceived hypocrisies in today’s Pasifika church societies.
- Critical awareness of: racism/ discrimination; questioning/ challenging and the importance of being well-informed so that you are not vulnerable to the decision-making whims of others; neo-liberalism in terms of living in a predominantly Western society with values of freedom and choice, yet being very restricted to comply with parents’ dictates even as adults and privacy and safety issues online.
- Expertise as “Digital Natives – Navigators”, very much a marker of younger generations and the ability to express themselves freely online, whilst being tempered by the strong control not to bring shame upon their families and very limited opportunity for their voices to be heard in their families and communities.
- Sexuality issues, “hooking up”, bullying issues online and partying with alcohol.

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